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SUBJECT: SENIOR ADVISOR SHORTLEY MEETS FORMER FDLR  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Classified By: Ambassador Michael R. Arietti, reason 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Senior Advisor Timothy Shortley met with Major General Paul Rwarakabije November 7 to discuss the FDLR's current operations and its relations with the DRC government. Rwarakabije claimed the FDLR cooperated closely with the DRC government, received materiel assistance from it, and planned to attack Rwanda after it joined with the FARDC in defeating renegade General Nkunda. Means of lowering tensions in the Kivus and avoiding more fighting, he said, included the participation of Nkunda's forces in brassage and the holding of an inter-communal dialogue in the Kivus. The FDLR was currently stronger than it had been for several years. However, the FDLR feared that recent efforts by the international community to broker peace in the Kivus might mean the cutting of assistance by the DRC, and its eventual demise. End summary.

¶2. (C) Rwarakabije, formerly the FDLR commander in chief (he defected to Rwanda in 2003), now a Commissioner with the Rwnadan Demobilization Commission (Commission Chairman Jean Sayingoza also attended), told Shortley that FDLR cooperation with the DRC began in 1998, when he was still with the FDLR. He spoke regularly with Joseph Kabil, then chief of the DRC armed forces (FARDC), serving under his father, President Laurent Kabil. Those close ties continue today, he said. Munitions and other supplies were commonly routed through the armed group PARECO, which had both FDLR and FARDC officer serving in it. While neither FDLR nor the FARDC felt strong enough to take on Nkunda, he said, in combination they considered themselves a match for him. After disposing of Nkunda, Rwarakabije claimed, the FDLR planned to begin attacks against Rwanda.

¶3. (C) Rwarakabije commented that the FDLR, while rearmed and re-energized as a result of its current close relations with the FARDC, was aware of increased international attention focused on the Kivus, and the visits of several envoys and diplomats to eastern Congo (including Shortley). It feared the cutting of assistance by the FARDC, and the resumption of what he termed its previous slow organizational decline as its ammunition ran low and its force size declined due to escapes, poor recruiting, and casualties. As an aside, Rwarakabije mentioned that his source of information was FDLR officers, who communicated directly with him by cell phone.

¶4. (C) Rwarakabije noted two principal means of averting fighting in North Kivu: the conduct of an inter-communal dialogue in the Kivus, and Nkunda's troops beginning to enter brassage. A third means of averting fighting, he said, would be for Kabil to call Mudacumura to Kinshasa and forbid his return to the Kivus. This would send an obvious signal that the FDLR's days were numbered. With their commander effectively under arrest, and assistance from the FARDC halted, the FDLR would begin to dissolve, senior officers planning their well-funded escapes, and rank and file disappearing into the forest. If Rwanda and the DRC opened

embassies in each other's countries, he said, this too would show the FDLR that its days in the forest of eastern Congo were at an end.

¶5. (C) Rwarakabije stated action was needed to be taken immediately to avert new fighting. The FDLR's 1st Division was in the process of transferring itself to North Kivus, he said, with 1000 of its 2000 complement already arrived. This would significantly strengthen the FDLR. Shortley outlined

USG actions to assist in the lowering of tensions in North Kivu, including blunt messages to DRC leadership on cooperation with the FDLR, the posting of officers to Goma, the issuance of a strong statement by the State Department condemning the FDLR (shared with Rwarakabije, who said he would send it to sympathetic FDLR officers) and the upcoming meeting in Nairobi.

¶6. (C) Comment. Rwarakabije appeared very well versed on the present state of the FDLR, and in near-constant communication with serving FDLR officers. As the former senior FDLR commander, his comments on cooperation and coordination between the FDLR and the FARDC are quite compelling. Lowering tensions in the Kivus appears possible, but by no means assured in the days to come. End comment.

ARIETTI